



## ANGEL ISLAND INSIGHT

### THE LAST HOISAN POETS & DEL SOL QUARTET

GENNY LIM  
FLO OY WONG  
NELLIE WONG

BENJAMIN KRIETH  
SAMUEL WEISER  
CHARLTON LEE  
KATHRYN BATES

WORLD PREMIERE  
HAW MEONG SUEY  
MAY 22, 2021

#### HAW MEONG SUEY, AH NUI

Haw Meong Suey  
U. S. born, aw Uk Lun, Hong Ngin Fow  
Oakland Chinatown

Haw Meong Suey  
Ah Ma, Ah Ba  
Ei fahn ngoi heck,  
Fed me rice  
Ei uk ngoi gee, ei som ngoi jeck  
Gave me shelter, clothes to wear

Haw Meng Suey  
Nei gow ngoi kwai nui, kwai nui  
You taught me bad girl, bad girl  
Nei gow ngoi haw nui, haw nui  
You taught me good girl, good girl

Ngoi koi see bock thlai how faht  
Now I am full of white hair  
Ngoi koi see bong jaw sai gai nah gung ngin  
I fight for working people in this world

Thank you, Mom, Pop  
Haw meong suey, haw meong suey

**NELLIE WONG**  
May 2021

#### HAW MEONG SUEY: IT'S REALLY TRUE

Mama, gill see ngnoy slai goy nin see,  
Mama, long ago when I was young,  
Nay wah ngnoy haw meong suey.  
You said that I carry good life's water.  
Coy see ngnoy bot sip thlom thleuy,  
Now that I am eighty three years old,  
Ngnoy op nay, jin guh hai wah.  
I answer you, it's really TRUE.  
Haw Meong Suey, jin guh hai wah.  
Good life's water, it's really TRUE.  
Haw Meong Suey, Haw Meong Suey,  
Good life's water, good life's water,  
Jin guh hai wah, jin guh hai wa.  
It's really TRUE, it's really TRUE.

**FLO OY WONG**  
April 20, 2021

*Haw Meong Suey is a phrase of our ancestral language, Hoisan-wa, that originated in the Pearl River Delta of the People's Republic of China. It means that the person who has it is a vessel of blessings.*

**THE LAST HOISAN POETS**  
Genny Lim, Nellie Wong, and Flo Oy Wong -  
trace their roots to China's Toisan villages,  
home of the Hoisan-wa.

#### HO MENG-SUEY

Ho Meng-Suey  
I said, "Mom, Why don't you learn English?"  
All the other kids' parents take ESL classes."  
Ma said, "Hmph! If you want to talk to me,  
you can talk to me in my language!"  
Thlay-yip wah! Nay mawt do m'gay'ok thlai!

Ho meng-suey  
Thay-yip wah, Hoisan-paw  
The accent's gotta swing like  
the tail of the ox pulling its cart  
along the Pearl River Delta  
Like Ishi, frozen in time  
they say you never left China

Ho meng-suey  
Hoisan-wah  
Language is the boat that delivers me from the homeland  
I've never set foot on to the country I call home  
Mei-guo, the beautiful country that never was  
Your first language is the language of your dreams  
But like the sun that will slowly lose its heat and light  
and get smaller and smaller to the size of a star one day  
Thlee-yip shall remain my mother tongue, my star  
as long as I remain

**GENNY LIM**  
May 4, 2021

This project was made possible with support from California Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Visit [www.calhum.org](http://www.calhum.org). "Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of California Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities."

